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Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2008

Council returns to a full agenda

Live Nation, ambulance fee, Twinbrook master plan all on tap for fall

by Janel Davis | Staff Writer

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The Montgomery County Council returns from recess today with a full agenda of key issues and decisions including how the county deals with urbanization, whether to implement a countywide ambulance fee and the outcome on a long-awaited music venue in downtown Silver Spring.

Council votes on these issues are expected within the next three months, Council President Michael J. Knapp said.

Influencing several of the council's decisions will be the state and county budget.

State tax collection information released last week reported tax collections \$73.5 million less than anticipated for fiscal 2008, which ended June 30. County information, including a possible increase in collections of some taxes including income taxes, is expected next week. County budget officials have estimated a \$250 million budget deficit next fiscal year.

Also expected this week from County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) is an update on how the county is cutting a required \$8 million from the budget as requested by the County Council in passing the fiscal 2009 budget in May.

To prepare for next year, the council will begin joint budget work sessions with the school board. The school system accounts for almost half of the county's budget.

Council members will also work to change spending guidelines, which determine how much money the county can afford to spend and how much it can afford to borrow. Part of the guideline overhaul will include requiring more frequent budget updates from county financial officials.

Also on the council's agenda is a follow-up to a disability task force report issued by a Leggett-commissioned group which found an unusually large number of county public safety employees receiving work-related disability retirement payments. A similar report is expected from Inspector General Thomas J. Dagley within the next week.

The council will also consider the affordable housing recommendations of another Leggett task force which released a number of possible housing solutions in a report earlier this year.

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